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SUBJECT: EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: THE DEVELOPMENT  
COMMITTEE'S NEW LEADERSHIP

REFS: A) BRUSSELS 3320; B) BRUSSELS 4016

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED-PLEASE HANDLE ACCORDINGLY

1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The Development Committee in the European Parliament (EP) is responsible for EU development assistance policy (over which the EP and the Council share legislative power). Its new chairperson is Italian Communist EP Deputy (MEP) Luisa Morgantini. We do not expect its customary push for increased development assistance funding nor its traditionally left-wing orientation to change significantly. The committee speaks out on a wide range of political issues from Palestine to Sudan. END SUMMARY.

#### ROLE AND COMPETENCES

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2. (U) The Development Committee is responsible for the promotion, implementation and monitoring of the development policy of the EU, including political dialogue and cooperation agreements with developing countries; the promotion of democratic values, good governance and human rights; matters relating to the ACP-EU Partnership Agreement with former EU colonies in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific region; and the EP's involvement in election observation missions. It also speaks out on political affairs and following a recent visit by the development committee to Sudan, the EP became the first Parliament in the EU to support the USG finding on genocide in Darfur (ref B).

3. (U) The Development Committee enjoys full legislative responsibilities together with member-state development ministers (meeting in the Council) for all European development legislation on issues under the control of the European Community budgets. The committee has paid close attention to reproductive health policies and combating HIV/AIDS.

#### WHO'S WHO IN THE NEW COMMITTEE

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4. (SBU) The principal committee officers are:

-- Luisa Morgantini (Italy, GUE/NGL), Chairwoman: A social worker, Morgantini, 63, started her political career in the Italian Communist Party in the sixties. She worked in trade unions in the eighties and nineties while starting her involvement in the peace movements including the founding of the Italian branch of the "women in black" anti-war organization. Elected MEP in 1999, she was the chairwoman of the EP delegation for relations with Palestine until 2004. She has been a persistent opponent of Israeli policy, allegedly once calling Ariel Sharon a war criminal. She told us that she believes that U.S. policies are at the root of the suffering of the Palestinians. In the Development Committee, she has opposed the Mexico City policy and other U.S. pro-life stances, such as the USG suspension of funds for UNFPA. However, British conservative MEP Nirj Deva told us recently that it was proving easier to work with her than he had expected.

-- Max van den Berg (The Netherlands, Party of European Socialists--PES), Vice-Chairman: A sociologist and faculty member at Groningen University, van den Berg, 58, has had a long career in development as the head of Novib (Oxfam Netherlands) from 1986 until his election to the EP in 1999. A Vice President of the Development Committee in the last term, he was also a member of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly.

-- Michael Gahler (Germany, European Peoples Party/European Democrats-EPP/ED), Second Vice-

Chairman: A lawyer and member of the German Christian Democratic Union (CDU), Michael Gahler, 44, is new to the Development Committee. An MEP since 1999, he has been a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee where he was responsible for the report on Estonia's EU accession.

-- Danut Budreikait (Lithuania, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe--ALDE), third Vice-Chairwoman: a newcomer in the EP, Budreikait, 51, worked as an economist at the Lithuanian Central Bank where she specialized in Lithuania's economic integration into the EU single market. She also was a member of the Lithuanian Science Academy.

-- Nirj Deva (UK, EPP-ED), EPP-ED coordinator: A UK citizen born in Sri Lanka, Deva, 56, after degrees in aeronautical and mechanical engineering, became a manager and businessman. Elected MEP in 1999, he has been an active member of the Development Committee and became in 2000 the rapporteur on the WTO and development. He has been a close contact of USEU since the previous parliamentary term. Unlike most other MEPs, Deva has been supportive of U.S. population policies.

-- Maria Martens (Netherlands, EPP-ED), second EPP-ED coordinator: with a degree in theology and marketing, Martens, 49, worked in the eighties and nineties in the Association of Catholic Organizations. She was also the chairwoman of the Dutch Episcopal committee in 2000 and is a member of the board of governors of the Utrecht University of Catholic Theology.

-- Miguel Martinez Martinez (Spain, PES), PES coordinator: An MEP since 1999, Martinez, 64, was President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and Vice-President of the WEU Assembly earlier in the nineties. A doctor from the Moscow State Institute for International Relations, he was also the President of the North-South Center of the Council of Europe until 2002. As an MEP, he was Vice President of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly in 2002-2004.

-- Thierry Cornillet (France, ALDE), ALDE coordinator: Cornillet, 53, was elected MEP in 1999. He holds a doctorate in political science and has done postgraduate studies in environmental law. He was an active member of the Citizens' Rights Committee in the previous parliamentary term, specializing in human rights - Cornillet was rapporteur on human rights in the EU in 2000.

COMMENT

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15. (SBU) The development committee in the European Parliament will remain a "leftist" committee. The new committee will keep a communist chairman with Luisa Morgantini, whom we expect to be more vocal and activist than the previous, low profile communist chairman, Joaquim Miranda. For the rest, the committee has undergone a nearly complete renewal with many high-profile MEPs from the previous term not reelected or not assigned to the development committee. Most of the new MEPs are not very high-level politicians. In the past, the committee has pushed consistently for increased spending on development assistance and generally advised the EP to grant additional emergency funds when requested by the Commission. We expect this to continue, as political groups are behind these decisions and the EP's general political balance has not been greatly modified by the latest elections. END COMMENT.

(DRAFTED:POL:MVANAVEBEKE)  
MCKINLEY